Right now, there are 155 Liberal MPs in the House of Commons - around 46% of all MPs. However, if an election were held today, the LPC would retain just 70 of those seats. This means that there are currently 85 or so

Liberal MPs - 55% of the Liberal caucus - who don't accurately represent the political preferences of their ridings.

Due to the supply-and-confidence agreement that the Liberals signed with the NDP, there most likely won't be another federal election until October 20, 2025 - over 14 months from the day I'm writing this post. This means that these deeply unpopular MPs - some of them on track to lose their ridings by up to 20 percentage points - will remain in office until that date.

The result of this is an electorate that is incredibly hostile towards those in power - but has few options to change who represents them in Ottawa.

A answer to this dilemma could be the implementation of recall elections in order to replace these MPs that have fallen out of favour with the public.

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What is a Recall Election?

Before I go any further, I think it is necessary to provide some context on what recall elections exactly are, how they are used in other countries, and if they could be implemented in Canada.

Recall elections are where elected officials are put up for special election before their term in office has ended. This process of recalling politicians can be done through collecting a set number of signatures and paying a fee in order to trigger an election.

This process of setting up early elections has been adopted in other democratic countries such as Switzerland and the U.S. - the 2021 recall of California governor Gavin Newsom is a recent example.

Although Canada has never officially adopted recall elections, the now-defunct Reform Party was a proponent of introducing them, as they were a proponent of introducing populist democratic reforms more broadly. As populism in Canada has historically been confined to the prairie provinces, however, the appetite for pro-democracy populist

measures such as recall elections has historically been limited among party elites.

Despite this intra-party opposition to democratic reform, there is a slight chance that the creation of recall elections could gain salience as an issue. Let me explain. Pierre Poilievre - who started his long political career via the Reform Party - introduced a bill in 2005 (Bill C-383) that would allow for members of the House of Commons to be recalled. Unfortunately, the bill never made it to second reading stage as the then-Liberal minority government was brought down in a non-confidence motion just months later. Despite the fact that Pierre has not spoken on this issue since or introduced similar bills in later parliaments, the existence of Bill C-383 at least demonstrates that he was, at least at one time, in favour of implementing recall elections.

Potential downsides of Recall Elections and how to fix them

One problem with recall elections is that they can throw an elected chamber - such as the House of Commons - into a constant state of flux as MPs are constantly being recalled by parties wanting to capitalize on

shifting poll numbers. The solution to this would be to create a fixed date once a year on which all recall elections occur. This strikes a balance between the consistency of a system without recall elections and the accountability that recall elections can provide.

Another issue is that a small but organized faction of the electorate could theoretically collect enough signatures to force a recall election - even if the local MP is still relatively popular and polling numbers haven't shifted. The solution to this lies within the bill that Pierre Poilievre introduced:

5. (1) The member ceases to hold office and the seat of the member becomes vacant if the petition for the recall of the member

(*a*) is returned to the Chief Electoral Officer within 60 days after it is issued;

(*b*) contains the signature and civic address of at least 50% of electors included in the final list of electors for the electoral district of the member; and

(*c*) contains the name and civic address of a witness to each signature.

Mandating that 50% of electors in a riding consent to a recall would ensure that a MP has to be truly unpopular before a recall election can be triggered.

Final Thoughts

The period between two federal elections can be as long as four years in Canada, which means massive political shifts can happen during this time. However, the general public has no opportunity to weigh in on these developments during this period, even if these developments may impact their well-being. Introducing recall elections would give the common people more control over who represents them and prevent those who ostensibly represent them from clinging to power.